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Chairman: Mr. Mapuranga ..... (Zimbabwe)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Expression of sympathy to the Mexican Government and people

1. **The Chairman**, referring to the cyclone that had just caused large-scale destruction and many casualties in Mexico, expressed the Committee's condolences to the Mexican Government and people. The international community was urged to respond to all appeals for help.

2. **Mr. Macedo** (Mexico) thanked the Chairman and the members of the Committee for their expression of sympathy, which he would transmit to his Government.

Requests for hearings (A/C.4/52/6)

3. **The Chairman** said that a request for a hearing had been submitted relating to the question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/52/6) by Mr. Rock Wamytan (Front de libération nationale Kanak socialiste). If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to grant that request.

4. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*) (A/52/23 (Part II), (Part V) and (Part VI), A/AC.4/52/L.3 and L.4, A/AC.109/2071, 2072, 2074 to 2078, 2080 to 2082, 2084, 2086 to 2088 and 2090)

Agenda Item 90: Information from non-self-governing territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/52/23 (Part IV) (Chapter VIII); A/52/365)

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Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (A/52/3, Chapter V, section E)

Agenda item 93: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of non-self-governing territories (*continued*) (A/52/388 and Add.1)

5. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the year 2000 would mark the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In 1988, two years before the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the General Assembly, in its resolution 43/47, had proclaimed the decade from 1990 to the year 2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that those efforts were long-standing and that, within the framework of its efforts to resolve international problems, the United Nations had unswervingly opposed colonialism, in particular through the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Special Committee had made a decisive contribution to the activities carried out with a view to eradicating colonialism in various parts of the world in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the right of peoples to self-determination and to live in independence, freedom and equality. The United Nations had made such efforts because the international community had been convinced that maintaining the yoke of colonialism impeded not only social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples but also the development of international economic cooperation.

6. Since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, most colonized peoples had attained independence and recovered their sovereignty through their concerted action and through the United Nations. Such action was based on the principles contained in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which called for the adoption of measures to accelerate the decolonization process. It had been followed by many other initiatives, particularly the adoption, on 12 October 1970, of a programme of action for the full implementation of the Declaration and a number of other resolutions.

7. The right of peoples to self-determination and the need to eradicate colonialism, racial discrimination and all forms of foreign domination were principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. His delegation hoped that, as stated in the annex of the report of the Secretary-General on the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to

Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/46/634/Rev.1), the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be able to attain its ultimate goal.

8. **Mr. Yousefi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite the achievements and efforts of the Special Committee since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 17 Territories remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation had always supported the efforts of the Non-Self-Governing Territories for self-determination and independence. Although the Special Committee had shown considerable flexibility in recent years, some administering Powers refused to participate in its meetings or authorize the dispatch of visiting missions to the Territories concerned. Those administering Powers must agree to participate actively and fully in the deliberations of the Special Committee.

9. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General was making every effort to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization but believed that the importance of the United Nations decolonization programme would be diminished by transferring the Decolonization Branch from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. His delegation believed that such restructuring would not necessarily enhance the efficiency of United Nations activities for decolonization. It therefore endorsed the draft resolution urging the Secretary-General to maintain the Decolonization Branch and all its functions pertaining to the Special Committee within the Department of Political Affairs, and to continue to make all necessary resources available to it.

10. **Mr. Bandora** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the failure of the many attempts over the years to enable the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination was essentially due to inflexible political attitudes and selfish economic interests. The peoples of those Territories had the right freely to determine their political status regardless of population and territorial size and how well endowed with resources they were. It was the responsibility of the United Nations to continue to exert pressure on the administering Powers to assist and prepare the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. The administering Powers should, *inter alia*, foster the awareness of the peoples of those Territories of their right to determine their political status in accordance with the options outlined in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV). They also had a duty to safeguard the resources of the Territories, preserve their environment and refrain from militarizing them.

11. The international community must be associated with efforts to prepare the Non-Self-Governing Territories for the exercise of their rights. If the administering Powers did not provide the necessary information as required under Article 73 *e* of the Charter and refused to receive visiting missions, the international community could neither measure the progress that had been made nor judge whether the necessary conditions existed for the exercise by the Non-Self-Governing Territories of their right to self-determination.

12. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the dialogue between the European Union and the administering Powers had made it possible to reach consensus on a resolution on small Territories and foreign economic interests. It hoped that the spirit of cooperation would speed up decolonization and that the administering Powers would resume cooperation with the Special Committee, in the manner of New Zealand and Portugal.

13. The Organization needed to know the real conditions prevailing in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and what measures had been taken to prepare their peoples for the exercise of their right to self-determination. It would be advisable to continue organizing regional seminars, because they were sometimes the only avenues through which the Special Committee had been able to receive information it needed from the peoples of those Territories as well as from other interested individuals and institutions. Cooperation was also required from the specialized agencies, some of which had yet to report on their implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

14. His delegation was pleased to note the progress made by Mr. James Baker and the parties to the conflict in Western Sahara. It hoped that the agreement on the proposed code of conduct for the referendum and the declaration of the parties with respect to the authority of the United Nations, as well as the agreement on the principles governing the resumption of the identification process, would finally make it possible to implement the settlement plan. Henceforth it would be necessary to preserve and consolidate the momentum of the Lisbon, London and Houston undertakings in order to build on what had been achieved and guard against any new setbacks in the process. The United Nations must maintain its vigilance so as to ensure that the referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara took place in circumstances of openness and fairness.

15. His delegation knew that the Secretary-General's reform proposals aimed at transferring the Special Committee's secretariat from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would be considered in detail by the

General Assembly, but it wished to add its voice to the opinion expressed by the Committee. His delegation believed that such a transfer would dilute the political importance of the Committee and that it was a measure which lacked administrative, financial or functional justification. The issue of decolonization had not been entirely settled. It was a political question which should be dealt with in the Department of Political Affairs. The Committee had always been effective in the Department of Political Affairs and his delegation saw no necessity or urgency in relocating its secretariat now that its mandate was coming to an end.

16. **Mr. Relang** (Marshall Islands) commended the United Nations and the former administering Power of the Marshall Islands for the assistance which they had given to his country, which had achieved its independence at the end of a peaceful decolonization process. The reluctance of certain administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee in considering the express desires of all the Non-Self-Governing Territories was troubling.

17. His delegation wished to thank the Chairman of the Special Committee and the delegation of Fiji for providing the Committee with honest assessments of the obstacles to achieving complete decolonization of all Non-Self-Governing Territories by the year 2000. His delegation called on the former administering Power of the Marshall Islands and on New Zealand to urge other administering Powers to follow their example and engage in the work of the Special Committee. It would not be possible to decolonize Non-Self-Governing Territories without the full cooperation and political will of the administering Powers.

18. His delegation was pleased to note the progress which had been made on the question of Tokelau and New Caledonia. The leaders of the South Pacific Forum had endorsed the recommendations on the question of New Caledonia presented in a report of the Forum's Ministerial Committee.

19. For more than 400 years, the population of the Marshall Islands had had no control over the economic, social, educational and military systems which had been imposed upon it. It had been unable to stop the testing of atomic and thermonuclear weapons in its boundaries, and continued to suffer from its appalling effects. The environment was still contaminated, disease and mortality rates had risen, populations had been displaced and the country continued to depend on foreign food supplies, medicine and science to resolve its problems. The Republic of the Marshall Islands expressed deep concern for the fate of its neighbour in the Pacific, French Polynesia, which had had a similar experience in the absence of self-determination.

20. The decolonization process could not be fully implemented, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/181 of 19 December 1991, without considering the political status of French Polynesia. Taking into account the inalienable right of the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination and independence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, his delegation requested that the Fourth Committee should consider the political status of French Polynesia and should add it to the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. It also invited the Committee to consider the political status of all non-self-governing Pacific island populations. It warmly welcomed the participation of the Congressional Delegate and the Governor of Guam in the Committee's deliberations. It had no doubt that Guam's Administering Authority would extend the same cooperation and consideration to Guam that it had shown to the Marshall Islands during its decolonization process.

21. **Mr. Snoussi** (Morocco) said that Morocco had not requested that petitioners should be heard. It could have asked escapees from the Hamada camp to describe to the Committee their tribulations during years of imprisonment, destitution and deprivation. Morocco had assumed that, after the talks in Lisbon, London and Houston, which Mr. Baker had helped broker, a new phase had begun and that the other side would be pleased to see an end to the stalemate (referred to in the Secretary-General's report of November 1995), which it itself had created.

22. Instead, the Committee had heard from leftist militants and the like who had come to speak on an issue which was none of their business, pretending they were unaware of its complexities. Those petitioners had repeated what they had been taught to say, even though the provisions of the settlement plan had been confirmed during the talks and Morocco, a traditional country, had restated its position that it would defend the great traditional values inherent in its culture and civilization. The French so-called petitioner, M. Lecoq, had spoken entirely on his own behalf and not, as the French Embassy in Rabat had indicated, on behalf of the persons he purported to represent. Although the petitioners had spoken about the Spanish census in 1974, what they had not said was that it had been confirmed during the Houston negotiations that the census was only one eligibility criterion among others. They had also referred in part to the well-known phenomenon of the exodus of populations to the North, but said nothing whatsoever about the eyewitness testimony of those responsible for operation "Ecouvillon" in 1958, during which, as "Combats Sahraouis", written by

M. Patrick Reneau indicated, some 40,000 Saharans had fled to the North. There had been no mention of one indisputable fact: the combatants, hounded by two armies also using aircraft, had had no choice but to head north. Mauritania, to the south, had not yet won its independence, nor had Algeria, to the east. In his dogged defence of his friends, M. Lecoq had forgotten that, in his day, one of the leading proponents of his ideology, Jean Jaurès, had fought to defend the independence and territorial integrity of countries which had, like Morocco, been coveted by European imperialism since the beginning of the century.

23. In order to facilitate the resumption of the referendum process, Morocco had agreed, at the invitation of the Secretary-General and with the intervention of Mr. Baker, to contact the current representatives of part of the Saharan population held in the Hamada camps. Morocco had participated in the Lisbon, London and Houston talks, which had clarified the points in the settlement plan. Thanks to the work of Mr. Baker, there could no longer be any question about the clearly defined rules on the right of the Saharans to be registered where they were, and the positions on the other objectives of the plan and its components, including the problems of troop confinement, refugees and prisoners, as well as the Code of Conduct, would be respected by both sides.

24. As in the past, Morocco would continue to cooperate with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to organize a referendum. The referendum would prove that the Moroccan identity of the Sahara was not only a juridical and historical expression, but also reflected the attachment of part of the Moroccan people to the nation, its kingdom and its King.

25. Although the Moroccan delegation was convinced that the matter was exclusively one for the Security Council, it had worked to facilitate the drafting of a compromise text. It would explain its position when it came to considering the draft resolution on the issue.

26. **Mr. Tesfaye** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation was pleased with the progress made by the Special Committee on the situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and with the adoption, after protracted negotiations, of a resolution on small territories on 14 March 1997.

27. While maintaining the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, and strictly adhering to the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Special Committee needed continually to take due consideration of the changing geopolitical climate and be more visionary in the discharge of its responsibilities, without ignoring the special or peculiar conditions of each Territory.

28. Despite the fact that the United Nations had made enormous contributions in achieving freedom for hundreds of millions of people across the globe, there were still seventeen Non-Self-Governing Territories which were not yet able to exercise their right to self-determination, and which looked to the United Nations for assistance. Hence, the international community should fulfil the commitment it had made and work to help them realize their aspirations.

29. Concerning information transmitted by the administering Powers to the Secretary-General, as called for in Article 73 of the Charter, his delegation stressed the importance of those Powers transmitting timely information on political and constitutional developments in their Territories, in order to help the Secretariat to prepare timely and up-to-date working papers that accurately depicted prevailing conditions in the Territories concerned.

30. While paying tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen the efficiency of the United Nations, his delegation expected a thorough and positive discussion on the rationale that had led to the transfer of the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the newly established Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and on the impact which that decision might have on the political essence and status of the decolonization programme.

31. With regard to Western Sahara, the last Non-Self-Governing Territory on the African continent, his delegation felt that the agreement on the pending issues which had so far prevented the settlement plan from being implemented, which Mr. James Baker had brokered between the parties concerned, represented a promising development for which the two parties should be congratulated. In that respect, it recalled that on 3 October 1997, the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs had reiterated Ethiopia's belief in the power of direct dialogue and expressed the hope that a free and fair referendum could soon be held in Western Sahara.

32. **Mr. Forrero** (Colombia) said that the fact that, ever since its establishment, the United Nations had achieved its greatest success in the area of decolonization, should not lead it to relax its efforts; instead it should redirect its activities to continue to assist the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into account the new international situation, until they could exercise their right to self-determination and accede to independence.

33. In accordance with the principles laid down in the Charter, all States — *a fortiori* those which still possessed colonies — were required to respect and ensure respect for the right of the peoples to self-determination. For that reason it was essential that the Special Committee should have the necessary means and should enjoy the cooperation of the administering Powers in carrying out its task. Stressing that the Committee played a unique role at the multilateral level, his delegation recalled that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries believed that the secretariat of the Committee should remain within the Department of Political Affairs and reaffirmed the right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to establish a democratic regime, without being subjected to any pressure, and to reject any foreign military presence. The Non-Self-Governing Territories should be given the means to promote their economic and social development while respecting their culture and preserving their environment.

34. The Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had recently welcomed the accession of certain peoples to independence, reaffirmed its commitment to the complete elimination of colonialism and the implementation of the Plan of Action of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and noted that any attempt to destroy the national unity and territorial integrity of a country, either partially or totally, was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

35. **Mr. Chekenyere** (Zimbabwe) said that although the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was drawing to an end, there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The peoples of those Territories had the right to determine their own destiny. The Special Committee, which had done a sterling job since its inception 37 years previously, would have failed to fulfil its mandate if it did not succeed in eliminating all vestiges of colonialism by the next millennium. The fifty-second session of the General Assembly provided yet another opportunity to remind the States Members of the United Nations responsible for the administration of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of their obligations and commitments under the Charter and relevant General Assembly resolutions so that the entire international community could work to restore to the inhabitants of those Territories their dignity and their rights.

36. Zimbabwe, like any other country which had won its independence with the assistance of the international community and the Special Committee, attached great importance to the role played by the United Nations in promoting the exercise by the peoples of the colonial Territories of their right to self-determination and independence. It therefore urged the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee and participate in its work so that the objective set by the General Assembly to eradicate colonialism by the year 2000 could be achieved.

37. With regard to Western Sahara, it was to be hoped that the efforts which had been deployed to resolve the conflict would bear fruit. It was commendable that the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, Mr. James Baker, had been able to create the necessary conditions to proceed towards the full implementation of the settlement plan. His delegation fully agreed with the Secretary-General that MINURSO should be provided with the necessary resources as soon as possible in order to build on the current momentum. Zimbabwe also fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that MINURSO should proceed immediately with the implementation of the settlement plan, starting with the completion of the identification exercise.

38. His delegation also wished to congratulate the two parties, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, on agreeing to enter into direct negotiations, which for many years had been the wish of OAU and the United Nations. It also urged the two parties to honour the agreements reached in London and Lisbon and signed in Houston. It believed that the cooperation of the two parties and the support of the United Nations were crucial for the success of the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. Zimbabwe remained convinced that it was the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that a just, free and transparent self-determination referendum was held to allow the Saharan people to determine their future freely, without any outside intervention or military or administrative constraint. It was now up to Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to respect and abide by the agreements signed in Houston. Zimbabwe had great hope that the people of Western Sahara, the last Non-Self-Governing Territory on the African continent, would at long last be able to exercise their right of self-determination and join the family of nations as a sovereign entity.

39. In conclusion, his delegation wished to express its misgivings about the proposal contained in the Secretary-General's reform programme for the transfer of the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Zimbabwe strongly believed that the political profile of the unit must be maintained until its mandate was fully implemented. Zimbabwe would oppose any proposal that sought to downgrade the political importance of the decolonization process. The United Nations was made up of sovereign Member States, many of

which had come into being as a result of that process. The sovereign rights of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could not be given second-class treatment.

40. **Mr. Terrier** (France), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, objected to the remarks by the representative of the Marshall Islands concerning the territories of French Polynesia. The people of those territories had consistently asserted, through an entirely democratic process, that they were part of the French Republic. French Polynesia was an integral part of the French Republic. One example was the fact that it participated in the national legislature (the National Assembly and the Senate) without any legal restrictions whatsoever. Its inhabitants were full citizens who enjoyed the same rights as citizens of the metropolitan country. French Polynesia enjoyed a large measure of autonomy within the French Republic. That status had been acquired in April 1996 on the eve of the territorial elections. At both the national level (the 1987 legislative elections) and the local level (the 1996 territorial elections), the majority of the population had unambiguously expressed their desire that Polynesia should remain under French sovereignty.

41. **The Chairman** said that, following his unofficial consultations with the representatives of Algeria and Morocco and direct negotiations between the Algerian and Moroccan delegations, a consensus resolution had been agreed upon. The Secretariat had been asked to circulate the text of the resolution to the members of the Committee.

Agenda item 84: Effects of atomic radiation (A/52/46)

42. **Mr. Meier-Klodt** (Germany) recalled that the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), whose forty-sixth session had been presided over by Mr. A. Kaul, had been established under General Assembly resolution 913 (X) dated 3 December 1955. Although the concerns of countries regrading the effects of atomic radiation had changed over the years, the Scientific Committee's *raison d'être* remained valid. It reviewed published scientific reports and technical documents with the aim of evaluating regional and global exposures to radiation and their attendant risks. The Committee had focused on exposures from natural sources of radiation, exposures from man-made sources of radiation, medical radiation exposures, the production and use of radio-isotopes, nuclear-power production, occupational radiation exposures, nuclear-weapons testing and accidents. Epidemiological studies of cancer caused by radiation, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) repair and mutagenesis and the hereditary effects of radiation also had been examined. Studies of survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continued to be a key source of epidemiological data on the effects of radiation exposure.

43. In 1995, the Scientific Committee had begun a new programme to review the data on atomic radiation and analyse the biological effects of radiation which would provide a comprehensive picture of the subject in the year 2000. For the past 42 years, the method of operation and the quality of the reports of UNSCEAR had made an important contribution. The Committee was a world authority in its field.

44. The draft resolution on the subject, which his delegation hoped would be adopted by consensus, incorporated some of the language of earlier resolutions and referred to paragraph 38 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 51/241 on the strengthening of the United Nations system, which had been adopted by consensus on 31 July 1997. The sponsors had made every effort to accommodate the concerns of various delegations. The following delegations were sponsors of the draft resolution: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation and Spain.

45. **Mr. Relang** (Marshall Islands) recalled that between 1946 and 1957, the Republic of the Marshall Islands had been the site of 67 nuclear-weapons tests conducted by the Administering Power during the trusteeship period. The bombs tested had been 7200 times more powerful than the atomic bombs used during the Second World War. The nuclear testing programme which had been carried out at the people's expense had shed light on the effects on man and the environment of exposure to excessive doses of radiation. Declassified documents proved that the effects of radiation were much more extensive than had been believed. Current generations of Marshall Islanders suffered the consequences and future generations would continue to do so. The number of people enduring illnesses attributable to radiation exposure was rising at an alarming rate, as was the incidence of cancer. It was becoming increasingly more difficult to provide adequate social, health and economic services.

46. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of the Marshall Islands had stated during the general debate at the current session, the knowledge gleaned on the effects of nuclear weapons from the test programme conducted in the Marshall Islands had made it possible to avert a nuclear war during the cold war. The people of the Marshall Islands and other Pacific islanders thus had paid

a heavy price. In its advisory opinion on the legality of threat or use of nuclear weapons, the International Court of Justice had recognized that the members of the international community had an obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament. That was all the more reason to call the attention of the international community to the effects experienced by the people of the Marshall Islands and to request its assistance.

47. Although his Government welcomed the studies carried out thus far by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, it believed that that work should be further elaborated, and was prepared to facilitate the Committee's task by providing it with declassified documents in its possession. It also was encouraged by recent indications that the United States was willing to address certain problems. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also had prepared an important study in the northern Marshall Islands.

48. His delegation appreciated the fact that it had been consulted by the sponsors of the draft resolution on the item. The text took into account some of its concerns. However, his delegation would carefully consider the recommendations on the re-evaluation of the role of UNSCEAR in the light of its concerns. It appealed to Governments and international organizations with expertise in the field to provide appropriate assistance needed for the clean-up and disposal of radioactive substances.

49. **Ms. Backes** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, whose member States were sponsors of the draft resolution introduced by the representative of Germany, noted that the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had been set up partly to meet the widespread concern of Member States regarding the dangers of atmospheric radiation levels resulting from nuclear weapons testing and partly out of the need to assemble and assess the available information on the effects of ionizing radiation on mankind and the environment. Although the grounds for concern had changed since the time that the Committee had been set up, the problems remained as pressing as in the past. It was enough to recall the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in that regard. It was therefore essential to continue to gather information on the effects of radiation.

50. The Committee's reports and studies were recognized by the international scientific community and in many cases provided a basis for the introduction of national and international standards for protection against the harmful effects on current and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment were exposed.

51. The European Union awaited with interest the extensive assessment of information on radiation exposures worldwide and the comprehensive review of the biological effects of radiation, currently being prepared by the Committee. The results would represent the state of knowledge at the end of the millennium. She welcomed the Committee's collaboration with international organizations and other organizations in the United Nations system, particularly the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization, the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements. The European Union assured the Special Committee, which continued to carry out its mandate with competence and independence of judgement, of its support. The following countries associated themselves with her statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

52. **Mr. Baby** (India) said that nuclear energy and its applications to medicine, industry and agriculture were becoming increasingly vital for improving health, standards of living, and the quality of life, particularly in developing countries. In that context, the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was extremely important in providing a balanced perspective on the effects, levels and risks of atomic radiation.

53. Congratulating the Committee on its outstanding work, he noted that its reports were used as reference documents by scientists worldwide and served as a basis for international and national standards for radiation protection. His delegation wished to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements. India had cooperated closely with the Committee as Indian scientists had participated actively in the Committee's meetings and made positive contributions in the preparation of its annual reports.

54. Epidemiological studies of the world's population living in high-level natural radiation areas were very useful for radiation risk estimations in the context of occupational exposures. In India the peoples living in the coastal strip of Kerala had for over 13 centuries been exposed to high levels

of natural radiation. The levels of radiation in that region varied considerably, with the average dose being five to six times greater than normal. The studies carried out thus far by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, of the Department of Atomic Energy of India, showed that newborn children in the high-level natural background radiation areas did not have higher frequencies of micronuclei or chromosomal aberrations than those in the normal background radiation areas. Realizing the importance of such studies, the Indian Government had undertaken genetic epidemiological studies to cover the whole population. Furthermore, the available epidemiological data had shown that the inhabitants of the high-level natural radiation areas of Kerala were not at any higher risk than those in other areas. Such observations necessitated not only further studies but also a new outlook regarding the effects on humans of low chronic and high acute exposures.

55. India was convinced that although nuclear power was a demanding technology, it had the potential to give significant amounts of energy. As one of the largest isotope producers in the world, India was in the forefront in matters concerning the use of isotopes.

56. The Indian nuclear programme accorded prime importance to safety in all its activities through the entire nuclear fuel cycle, from prospecting and mining of ores to management of waste. Safety was an important subject for research and development in the various institutions of the Department of Atomic Energy and dedicated groups had been involved, since the inception of the programme, in continuous monitoring and upgrading of systems, on the basis of their own and others' experience. Over the years, India had progressively evolved its regulatory system. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) met the prevailing international norms of regulatory practices and had successfully carried out its function as watchdog over the Indian nuclear programme and over other installations handling radiation.

57. Lastly, he said that India would cooperate fully with the Committee in realizing the latter's objectives and that it would join the sponsors of the draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" under agenda item 84.

58. **Mr. Felicio** (Brazil) said that it was time to review the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and perhaps to give it new guidance. That had been the position taken by Brazil during discussions by the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, whose report had been noted by the General Assembly at the fifty-first session. It was appropriate to implement without delay the recommendation which the General Assembly had adopted inviting IAEA and WHO to consider the functions and role of the Scientific Committee and submit a recommendation on the issue to the Assembly at its fifty-third session, and to request the Scientific Committee to submit its report to IAEA and WHO, so that they could evaluate it and inform the General Assembly accordingly.

59. Over the years, IAEA and WHO had gained experience and technical expertise in the field of atomic radiation that the General Assembly lacked. Given that members of the Fourth Committee did not have the technical background required for the appropriate assessment of the Scientific Committee's report, that task should be given to IAEA and WHO. It would be possible later on to decide whether the Scientific Committee should continue to report to the General Assembly or, perhaps more appropriately, should function under the aegis of a specialized agency.

Organization of work

60. **The Chairman** reminded the Committee that the deadline for the submission of all draft proposals relating to agenda item 18 or amendments relating to the recommendations of the Special Committee on Decolonization had been fixed for Thursday, 16 October at 6 p.m. In view of the small number of speakers listed, the Committee would hold only one meeting, on Friday, 17 October.

61. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea) announced that Algeria, South Africa and Venezuela had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/52/L.4.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.